UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

MID-PACIFIC REGION

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Quartz Valley Indian Reservation Wells Project

FONSI 10-XXX-MP

Recommended by:			
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In accordance with Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the Mid-Pacific Regional Office of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), has determined that providing funds to install four new community wells and further develop one existing well to provide a secure water source for the Quartz Valley Indian Reservation (QVIR) as well as install 13 groundwater monitoring wells within the QVIR is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required. This Finding of No Significant Impact is supported by Reclamation's Draft Environmental Assessment (EA), *Quartz Valley Indian Reservation Wells Project*, and is hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND

Pursuant to the *State's Emergency Drought Relief Act of 1991*, as amended (Drought Act), Reclamation is distributing \$40 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) (P.L. 111-5) to fund emergency drought relief projects. In February 2009, while the State of California was in the third consecutive year of a drought, Governor Schwarzenegger declared a drought emergency. In compliance with Section 104 of the Drought Act, the QVIR, who is suffering from the prolonged drought and experiencing effects to the health and safety of tribal members, declared a drought emergency and requested Reclamation's assistance for the purpose of installing new community and monitoring wells.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is for Reclamation to provide funding to the QVIR for the installation of four new community wells, 13 groundwater monitoring wells and to further develop one existing community well. Funding is being provided to QVIR for the following reasons: (1) current drought conditions at QVIR have caused a few drinking water wells on the Reservation to dry up in the late fall continuing until the water table has been recharged; (2) the current spatial distribution of the wells on the Reservation has led to some key areas with little to no water supply; and (3) information is needed in order to develop a groundwater management plan as well as a drought management plan for the Reservation and the greater Quartz Valley. Installation of the new wells and development of the one existing well will provide an immediate water supply to the Reservation. Installation of groundwater monitoring wells would provide QVIR with the ability to monitor their groundwater resource.

FINDINGS

Reclamation has prepared an EA which analyzes the impacts of the Proposed Action. Based on the analysis in the EA, Reclamation has found that the installation and development of community water and monitoring wells would not result in significant impacts to the environment and does not require the preparation of an EIS. This Finding of No Significant Impact is based upon the following:

- 1. <u>Surface Water Resources</u> Best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented, which includes carrying out the work prior to the rainy season. A buffer of 200 feet will be maintained adjacent to streams, riparian corridors and wetlands. The monitoring wells and well for restoration purposes near Shackleford Creek would be approximately 1,500 feet from the creek. The monitoring well network associated with the new wells would be used for monitoring groundwater temperatures and levels in and near streams on the Reservation. Data collected from these wells would provide information to help develop a groundwater management plan and a drought management plan for the QVIR. With the implementation of BMPs, surface water resources would not be impacted by the Proposed Action. Three of the four new wells would be used intermittently (as back-up, for summer camp, and restoration) and all will have associated monitoring wells to record groundwater levels. The new wells would pump a maximum of 20 gpm and would therefore, not draw down the aquifer and not impact surface water resources in the area.
- 2. <u>Groundwater Resources</u> The monitoring well network associated with the new wells would be used for monitoring groundwater temperatures and levels in and near streams on the Reservation. Data collected from these wells would provide information to help develop a groundwater management plan and a drought management plan for the QVIR. The new wells would pump a maximum of 20 gallons per minute (gpm) and would therefore, neither draw down the aquifer nor impact groundwater resources in the area. In addition, the proposed 13 monitoring wells are intended to monitor groundwater levels within the QVIR so as to determine effects, if any, on groundwater in the area. This will allow the Tribe to determine how pumping affects groundwater and their wells. With the minimal amount of groundwater pumped and with continual monitoring of the resource, the Proposed Action would not result in significant impacts to groundwater resources in the area.
- 3. <u>Land Use</u> The wells would be installed on previously disturbed land which would not impact current land use. The Proposed Action would not result in short-term or long-term significant impacts to land use in the proposed project area.
- 4. <u>Biological Resources</u> Shackleford Creek provides habitat for coho salmon and steelhead; however, the Proposed Action would have no effects on fish or their habitat. Restoration efforts allowed with the construction of one of the wells would actually help to improve habitat for salmonid species within Shackleford Creek. The amount of water extracted for the new wells would be minimal and is not expected to affect water levels in Shackleford Creek. Therefore, Reclamation has determined that the Proposed Action would have no effect on coho salmon or other biological resources in the area due to the limited area affected.

- 5. <u>Cultural Resources</u> The Proposed Action is the type of activity that has the potential to affect historic properties. A records search, pedestrian survey, and Tribal consultation were conducted within the project area. The results of this review and consultation with SHPO are pending. Funds will not be provided to the Tribe until Section 106 compliance has been completed.
- 6. <u>Indian Trust Assets</u> The nearest ITA is the QVIR and therefore, the Propsed action would not significantly impact ITAs.
- 7. <u>Environmental Justice</u> The Proposed Action would not disproportionately affect minorities or low-income populations and communities. The Proposed Action would benefit the tribe, a minority population. There would not be significant impacts to human health or environmental effects associated with the Proposed Action.
- 8. <u>Global Climate Change</u> The Proposed Action would not include any significant change on the composition of the atmosphere and therefore would not result in significant impacts to climate change.
- 9. <u>Cumulative Impacts</u> The Proposed Action would not result in significant cumulative impacts to surface water resources, groundwater resources, geology and soils, land use, biological resources, cultural resources, ITAs, environmental justice, or global climate change.